

Present problem in Assam —whither its solution

The situation in Assam is surcharged with tension and high emotions. At this stage, any biased view and unobjective assessment will, instead of helping, further complicate a just and rational solution which is of paramount need today, in the interests of the common people not only of Assam but all over the country. For this, what is required is a cool, unbiased and sympathetic understanding of the problem in all its aspects to find out a scientific solution that can protect and advance the unity of the common people.

No doubt, the agitation going on in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam under the leadership of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the Gana Sangram Parishad on the declared objective of striking the names of 'foreigners' from the electoral roll and their deportation from the state, has been able to create a stir among major sections of Assamese speaking population.

Although no all-India Party is openly involved in this agitation yet the rank and file members and local leaders of Congress(I) Congress (U) and the Janata are seen to be actively associated with it.

The organisations leading this agitation demand that those who migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, as also Nepal, the total number of which according to their estimates comes to 4 millions should be sorted out, their names to be struck off the electoral rolls and deported from Assam or so to say, from India as such.

Responsible political parties, knowledgeable circles as also sane people who admit the fact that many nationals of former East Pakistan who as Hindu migrants as also the Nepalese settled permanently in Assam, do not however agree on this figure of settlers these organisations are claiming. The political parties, almost all of them, even though having their agreement on the question of sorting out the foreign nationals and sending them back to their original home lands through constitutional methods and with a humanitarian approach have a basic difference with the organisers of this

agitation. The constitutional provision for citizenship, the law of citizenship and its enforcement methods in our country suffer from various defects and anomalies. In view of this, a mere legal-technical approach which the organisers of the agitation are showing will deprive lakhs of Indian citizens from citizenship rights and reduce them to stateless people. A flexible, humanitarian and realistic approach can only save these helpless and innocent people.

Not only this, in the name of defending the interest of the Assamese-speaking people, the manner in which this agitation was organised and led has whipped up communal hatred and tension among the different linguistic and religious communities, nationalities, sub-nationalities and ethnic groups in a multi-lingual and multi-nationality state like Assam and the frenzy thus generated has come to such a pass that one section of the common people has been involved in direct confrontation with another. To ease this rather explosive situation in Assam we are to find out a rational solution of the problem and in order to do this, what is of utmost importance is to make an in-depth study of it in all aspects from an unbiased scientific approach.

At the outset it is to be noted that the present situation was not created overnight. The uninterrupted rule of the Congress Party for thirty two years defending in reality the rule and exploitation of capital and more particularly the neglect to the particular problems of the border states like Assam

that had to bear the brunt of migrating population after partition paved the way for the present explosive situation.

It is a well known fact that since its incorporation into the British imperialist rule in the first part of nineteenth century (1824) Assam, sparsely populated but with good natural resources attracted the people of various linguistic and religious communities from the adjoining provinces. Permanent settlers in Assam from the people of adjoining provinces thus started since then. Instead of helping the process of assimilation and integration between the new settlers and the original inhabitants, the British imperialist rulers, rather instigated one section against the other, obviously with the intention of weakening the nascent national freedom movement. As a result, the dissension and distrust between these two sections started growing. The feelings of the Assamese speaking original inhabitants were further exacerbated due to the mischievous move of the British rulers to introduce Bengali as the medium of instruction in place of Assamese. This drove a wedge between the Assamese speaking and Bengali speaking communities. Although the Assamese speaking people through their long struggle forced the British rulers to withdraw that ill-conceived policy—ill-feelings and animosity between these two major lingual communities persist and the capitalist class and their subservient parties, in pursuit of their class interests and opportunist politics, never miss to exploit this divisive factor.

It is known to all that since the freedom movement of India was led by Indian bourgeoisie at a time when capitalism became decadent and crisis-ridden i.e. when it

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Observe 32nd Anniversary of the Party in a Solemn and Befitting Manner

24th April, marking the foundation anniversary of our beloved party, SUCI, stands out as a day resplendent with glory in the history of revolutionary struggle for emancipation from exploitation and oppression of the people in our country. For, thirty-two years back, the betrayal of the people in our country who had fought for freedom but been deprived of its fruit Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our great departed leader, teacher and guide determined to provide the people with a party of their own who can lead them to their cherished goal of emancipation from oppression in every sphere of life and on this day under his leadership was founded SUCI, the genuine working class party in our soil. Undeterred and never dismayed by surrounding mountain-high obstacles Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, built up our party brick by brick in unceasing toil and relentless struggle covering every aspect of life; thus concretising Marxism-Leninism in our soil, elaborating and further developing its teachings and bequeathing to us his invaluable guidelines in the political, cultural and moral field. Today, our party, drawing on the immeasurable wisdom and great revolutionary teachings of our beloved leader, teacher, guide and Founder General Secretary of our Party, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh is steadily gaining in strength

throughout the length and breadth of our country to the utter dismay of the enemy of the people who try in vain to obstruct the growth of our party and to paint such as a non-entity. In the midst of decay and disintegration and filthy morass of bourgeois politics the shining example of our party and the great teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh stands out in marked contrast, deeply attracting the people and filling them with new hope. Each year, the historic 24th April marks one year of uninterrupted growth and consolidation of our party and each year marks a diminishing distance from the goal of successful emancipation of our people; proving the correctness of our party's stand and politics and carrying with it of the hope and message of leading the struggle of the people for liberation to its successful culmination.

This year, observance of 24th April comes at a time when Indira Gandhi has been seated in power with two thirds majority in Parliament, by the bourgeois class, with the help of administrative rigging machinery. In the few months which have elapsed since and from all the measures and policies taken up by Indira Gandhi it has become clear that in pursuance of her own petty party interests and in order to protect the overall interests of the ruling class she has already embarked on an all out

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entered the phase of moribund capitalism, the different nationalities and sub-nationalities could not merge together giving birth to a very strong foundation of Indian nationalism. The task of cultural and social revolution which ought to have been carried out for democratisation of society as also for formation of Indian nation was neglected because of the reformist-oppositional character of the bourgeois leadership. It is precisely for this reason that although India, through transference of power at the hand of the bourgeoisie, emerged as an independent nation and attained its nationhood remained politically culturally disunited on the questions of religion, caste, language etc.

That is why, this one nationhood concept did not get a firm root anywhere in this country. This has been so particularly in the neglected provinces which remained industrially backward and where the foreign missionary institutions in the name of conducting religious and welfare activities actually injected an insular or separatist feeling among the people right from the days of the British rule. This served the interest of the imperialist rulers in as much as it disturbed the process of development of nationhood and thus weakened the national freedom movement. It may be mentioned in this connection that the agents of the foreign powers especially the CIA, as in the past, are also active now and trying to fish in troubled waters as is revealed from some documents now being clandestinely circulated in Assam. The national rulers did never care to go deep into the causes of insular minds and separatist feelings of the people but following the foot steps of their imperialist predecessor, they also resorted to bureaucratic-military coercive methods to suppress the people of

these regions nor have they taken firm steps against the agents of foreign powers.

Beside all these factors, the oppressive role and behaviours of a section of Bengalee bureaucrats who were pliant tools of the imperialists as also those of the unscrupulous traders and business communities helped no less the parochial and divisive forces to project the entire Bengali speaking community as the enemy of the Assamese speaking people.

To assess the situation fully, it is also to be noted that despite strong urge of Assamese speaking people to develop as a full-fledged nationality in all fields—economic-political-social-cultural, due to very many reasons, the process has been obstructed and with all the attendant internal weaknesses and shortcomings there has been a stunted growth of Indian nationalism within the Indian state structure. The capitalist class character of the Indian state bears with it the characteristic feature of nationality oppression. It is known to all that in a multi-lingual and multi-nationality nation like India with exploitative capitalist economy as its base this nationality oppression i.e. the oppression by the dominant nationality bourgeoisie on the people (and also on the bourgeoisie) of the dominated nationality has created dissension and disunity among the people and has brought with it a kind of suppressed nationality feeling among them. Although Bengalees as a community has been subjected to such oppression at the hands of the Northern Indian bourgeoisie, still in case of Assam the situation has taken a different turn.

The Assamese speaking nationality being the weaker side has also become the victim of oppression by the dominant Bengali nationality bourgeoisie. The Central Government during thirty years of Congress rule has

always been found to be bent on creating cleavage among the people particularly belonging to these two major nationalities which has been manifested time and again, through its unscientific language and other policies. This, in turn, has generated a deep sense of resentment among them. The Assamese speaking people feel the burn but have not yet been able to locate its real cause as also to know how to bring an end to it from a scientific Marxist-Leninist outlook.

Another aspect to be noted in this connection is the fact that with the gradual development of communication system connecting other parts of the country with Assam, there was a large influx of population from the adjoining provinces, mainly due to economic reasons, not only during the British rule but after the partition also when a large number of refugees settled permanently in Assam. But along with this increasing number of population and its multiplication there was hardly any appreciable economic development and industrialisation in Assam. From the point of view of rate of economic growth or industrialisation, improvement in transport and communication system, educational facilities etc. the whole eastern India, including Assam has suffered neglect and discriminatory treatment and as a result it still remains relatively underdeveloped and backward.

When, therefore, the objective situation was demanding prompt measures to develop industries and other avenues for employment as also betterment of communication system in this state, both the state and central governments remained as silent spectators. In the matter of developmental works too, at least to the extent they have been undertaken and implemented in other states, the Congress government has all-through taken a patently neglecting and discriminatory attitude towards this

state. People's resentments against this governmental attitude burst forth time and again in the past. Yet the Congress government and leaders did not change their policies and attitude.

Rather, taking advantage of near absence of left and democratic movement in the state, these leaders and parochial forces, in order to hide their own guilt and save themselves from the anger of the people, instead of pointing out the real cause of unemployment, destitution and miseries which was nothing but capitalist exploitation and more particularly the incompetence and failures of successive governments—diverted the attention of the Assamese speaking populace against the new settlers in Assam. Not only this, the influx of people from the then East Pakistan was due to the curse of unjust vivisection of the country which was agreed to by the ruling party, Congress. But it is really tragic that the central Congress government did neither come forward with helping hand to undertake the responsibility of economic rehabilitation of the refugees nor did they approach this problem with humanitarian attitude it deserved. Herein lies the height of criminal act of the central government for which the people of Assam had to suffer most. Now with the influx of population from other parts of the country and more particularly of the Bengali refugees in the post-independence period, the percentage variation between the Assamese speaking original inhabitants and the new-comers was diminished. But ever since the period of reorganisation of the states on the basis of language the Assamese speaking people became very much apprehensive about maintaining their majority.

The capitalists of Assam who were eager to invest capital in the state but were unable to compete with the monopolists who were controll-

ing the all-India market, got all sorts of support and patronage from vested interests represented by bourgeois parties like Congress, Congress (I), Janata etc. the rabid parochial forces and a section of bureaucrats in the administration; all these forces combined to conduct a systematic and powerful campaign through newspapers and journals which caused a widespread apprehensions among the Assamese speaking people that they may be swamped in their own land by the Bengali speaking people, that they may themselves be 'foreigners' one day, that they may lose their language, culture and distinct identity, that there is a conspiracy afoot by the Bengalees to grab Assam and form a 'Greater Bengal' and that the rising Muslim population may even convert Assam into a Muslim state, so on and so forth.

It is to be noted that this campaign got a fertile ground in the deep-seated parochial and provincial feelings among the masses which had been created by these bourgeois parties and was backed by even the parties known as lefts. This motivated campaign brought in its wake a severe reaction among the people so much so that they took whatever was propagated by these reactionary forces as true and firmly resolved to 'free their motherland from the clutches of the foreigners'—a feeling germinated by some sort of nationality-fanaticism.

We are of the opinion that this distrust, ill-feeling and animosity between the people of different linguistic and religious communities in Assam centring round their respective place, position and life's different problems could not have deteriorated to such an alarming proportion had there been the growth and development of left and democratic movements on the edifice of higher culture with the active support and cooperation of all the left and democratic parties

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working in the state.

These movements by opening up the opportunities of freer exchange of views and opinions among the people of different communities on socio-economic cultural questions and issues as also uniting them all in a common platform of struggle on concrete problems would have gone a long way in allaying the fear and misgivings of the Assamese speaking people about other oppressed people having come from other states yet permanently settled in Assam, cemented their unity on the firm basis of mutual trust and confidence and advanced to some extent their common cause of wresting some immediate demands from the unwilling hands of the central and state governments run by Congress and other bourgeois parties.

Not only that, there was pressing necessity to involve the minorities settled in Assam in the struggle to fight out economic backwardness of Assam as also to protect and help flourish their language and culture.

But it is really regrettable that when the different sections of the people remain divided, falling victim to the pernicious propaganda and opportunist politics of the parties subservient to bourgeois class interest and when the left and democratic movements on some common burning issues could have brought about some relief to all sections of the people and through this process of democratic mass movements, built up goodwill, amity and fraternity among them, the left parties in the state like CPI, CPI(M) and RCPI failed to live up to this urgent need.

These parties not only confined themselves to parliamentary politics of manoeuvre but even at times spinning some fanciful theories actually lent their support to rabid provincial and parochial trends of thinking and sentiments.

Ever since the Assembly Election of 1978 in the

state an attempt to organise agitation on parochial line was on the agenda of the bourgeois and vested classes and the parties subserving their interest with the obvious intention of containing the rising tide of left and democratic politics. The type of propaganda and movement exploiting the regional sentiments and apprehension of a section of the people, infusing them with a deep sense of nationality fanaticism directed against another section of common people were gaining ground speedily in absence of equally vibrant appeal to sanity and reason. The natural outcome of this could not be other than a tragic fratricidal war between different sections of the common people to the glee and sigh of relief of the capitalists and vested classes and their subservient parties. We appealed to the left parties of the state again and again in the past to unitedly discharge our responsibility to save the people from this catastrophe. But we could not evoke any response from them. In 1978 we moved the left and democratic parties again with the urgent appeal for coming forward with common stand and concrete programme of action so as to help the people freeing themselves from the tentacles of vicious parochial and utterly reactionary propaganda and movement.

As a result of our persistent efforts a meeting was held in the month of August '78. At that meeting we proposed for ensuring the Assamese speaking people full guarantee of their language, culture, distinct identity as also protection of just economic interests while taking at the same time all out efforts and responsibility to make the people of the state awakened to the gravity of the danger posed by the parochial and divisive forces. It is to be noted that our proposal went unresponded by other parties.

Later, in the same year, Sri Golap Barbara, the then Chief Minister

convened an all-party meeting. At that meeting also, consistent with our earlier stand we proposed that just and concrete steps should be taken to allay all sorts of apprehensions of the Assamese speaking people; they must be convinced that the propaganda about the conspiracy of wiping out the state of Assam by forming 'Greater Bengal' or its conversion into a Muslim state was wild and baseless. Our appeal to all other parties to take this just stand and move fast to counter the mischievous propaganda of the parochial and reactionary forces went unheeded again.

As we have said earlier that it is our firm opinion that if only there had been a proper atmosphere born out of democratic movement in the state, these serious misgivings and apprehensions of the Assamese speaking people would not have arisen and provided a fertile soil for the parochial and fissiparous forces to reap a rich harvest. In order to remove the very cause of apprehension of the Assamese speaking people and for a just political solution of the problem, we felt the necessity of giving constitutional recognition and safeguard to Assamese language and for that necessary change of constitution. We also stand for safeguarding Assamese culture and distinct identity. But in the face of this just solution being offered by us, none of the other parties made positive response in their bid to sail safe in pragmatic politics. This attitude amounts to gross neglect of the genuine interest of the common people. Times without number, we have appealed to these parties, thereafter to come forward in discharge of obligation to the people if they feel they have any. But with profound sorrow we can only note here that in the face of the rising tide of parochial and utterly reactionary propaganda and its disastrous effect on the people leaders of these parties did not think it their duty to come out of the shell

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of indifference and inaction and thus left the field open for the tragic episode of fratricidal conflict to be enacted. Will not history punish them for this guilt?

It may be recalled in this connection that in the first week of November 1979 when the tragic communal clashes in Naharkatia and other places were occurring. We immediately contacted the political parties to take a united programme to stop this kind of fratricidal conflicts. And it was as a result of our persistent efforts that the left and other parties sat in a meeting on 18th November last year. From that meeting eight political parties issued a statement containing some important proposals for maintaining peace and communal harmony as also suggesting some concrete measures to solve the problem of foreign nationals in Assam. Unfortunately however our proposal for taking some bold programme for organising public opinion in support of these proposals was not accepted by others.

We also proposed to them that in order to evolve a united stand in the round table conference convened at New Delhi by the Prime Minister, the parties should sit together. But even this suggestion of ours was not accepted by other parties. Our attempt to evolve a unified stand thus foiled, we alone had to present in the Round Table Conference the viewpoints based on the agreed stand of eight parties contained in the joint statement issued earlier.

We demanded of the central government to deal firmly with the rabid provincial and parochial forces to ensure safety and security to all sections of the people. Along with this demand we asked the government to take into cognition that the apprehensions of the Assamese-speaking people generated by the vicious

propaganda of the parochialists should be removed by recognition of Assamese as the state language, as also by taking all means and measures to ensure full guarantee to Assamese culture and distinct identity of the Assamese speaking population. We also invited the central government as well as the political parties to combine their efforts to dispel the misgivings of the Assamese speaking people about the so-called prospect of Assam being reduced to a Muslim state or incorporated in 'Greater Bengal'. In fact these were the main planks in the mischievous propaganda of the parochial forces and so by convincingly proving to the Assamese speaking people that they were all wild and baseless propaganda, sanity could be restored.

As for the concrete demands placed on our behalf at the conference we may mention that although our party agreed generally with the consensus of other parties that the Census report of 1971 should be accepted as the logical basis for determining the question of foreign nationals, particular attention must be paid to protect the interest of the minorities without any discrimination. We also pointed out that the question should be dealt with flexibility and from an attitude of sympathy otherwise those who actually came and settled permanently in Assam in 1971 or even before but could not register their names either due to ignorance or defective government machinery will be unjustly declared as foreign nationals.

We demanded that the Assamese language should be accepted as the state language and for this constitutional guarantee is to be conferred on it by suitable amendment to the Constitution itself. We demanded that in view of the pressing unemployment problem and economic backwardness of Assam,

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Comrade Debaprasad Sarkar's Budget Speech in West Bengal Assembly

Speaker Sir,

The budget placed by the Finance Minister on 27.2.80 is the fourth full budget of the 'Left Front' government. In our opinion, in budget discussions the focal point should be as to how much effective is this budget in solving such burning problems of public life as the tremendous price rise of essential commodities, the provisions of job for the lakhs of unemployed, the unprecedented crisis of transport system, question of giving relief to the people from the grinding burden of taxation etc. So I would concentrate my discussion mainly on these points.

First of all let us come to the question of price rise. The Finance Minister has held the central government responsible for price rise of essential commodities. His contention is that prices of commodities have gone up because of imposition of taxes on essential commodities raising of prices of kerosene, diesel etc. by the central government. No doubt, all these policies of central government contribute to price rise. But I would ask, are not the complaints made against the central government by the Finance Minister for price rise equally applicable against the 'Left Front' government of this state? Take for example, the Finance Minister's accusation that as a result of enhancing the prices of coal, diesel kerosene and other petroleum products by the central government through administrative order the prices of commodities have gone up. True, but cannot the same charge be brought against the state government as well? They too are most covertly enhancing the prices of essential commodities through administrative orders. As an example I am citing the case of milk distribution system by the state government. Through the milk distri-

bution centres of Calcutta three qualities of milk—Standard Milk, Toned Milk and Cow Milk—are sold. Standard Milk is sold at the rate of Rs. 1.80 per liter. Since compared to the total requirement the supply from such centres is inadequate the bulk of the people have to collect milk from other sources. Taking advantage of such a situation the state government by opening new centres under the style and name of Mother Dairy, is selling in polythene packets, the same quality milk as that of Standard Milk at the rate of Rs. 2.80 per litre. Has not the state government by this manoeuvre enhanced the price of milk from Rs. 1.80 to Rs. 2.80? Many such instances of raising the price through covert methods by the state government can be cited—but I need not digress on those. Next comes the question of kerosene. The central government has raised the price of kerosene, that has enhanced the miseries of the people. But over and above this rise the state government has made a further rise of two paise per litre. Has not by this the state government contributed further to aggravate the miseries of the people? What would be the answer of the Finance Minister? Then again, it is true, the central government has multiplied the miseries of the common people by raising the price of coal. But yet, whereas the Coal India is selling coal at the rate of Rs. 7.50 per maund the people of West Bengal have to purchase that coal at the rate of Rs. 15 to 20. What answer the West Bengal government will give to this?

Again, the Finance Minister says that most of the essential commodities come from outside states. So it is beyond the means of the state government to control the prices of those commodities without the help and cooperation of the central government.

But let me ask, why are the prices of commodities which are not brought from outside the state, which are produced here, increasing? Why is the price of rice increasing? Why are the prices of fish, vegetables etc. going up by leaps and bounds? What has the 'Left Front' government to say? Besides, is not the taxation policy of the 'Left Front' government one of the main reasons of this alarming rate of price increase? Say for instance, the 'Left Front' government after assuming power in this state has increased the rate of Sales Tax from 6% to 8%. And in the last three budgets have imposed additional Sales Tax to the tune of Rs. 38 crores. May I ask the Finance Minister whether he agrees or not that the prices of commodities have risen due to the imposition of this additional amount of Sales Tax? If the present budget is analysed one would see that after assuming power the 'Left Front' government has imposed additional Rs. 12.5 crores as Octroi. Does the Finance Minister admit that this additional imposition of Octroi has given a spurt to price rise?

Moreover, another way of resisting price rise is to keep the hoarders and dishonest traders under control—but may I know what has been the role of the 'Left Front' government in this regard? Have they taken any step in that direction? While commenting on the imposition of P. D. Act by the central government, Jyoti Basu himself confessed that the state government has enough power in its hands to punish dishonest traders and hoarders. We too think so, and in this connection I want to clearly state that our party is thoroughly opposed to the imposition of the P. D. Act by the Indira Congress government on the plea of punishing dishonest

business men. But my question is why the state government even though it has Essential Commodities Act, Hoarding Control Order and the different sections of Price and Stock Declaration Order at its disposal, why are they not strongly applying these against the hoarders and dishonest business men, why are they not coming forward to punish them with strong hands? Can the Finance Minister deny that this utter failure on the part of the state government to take penal measures against the black marketeers hoarders and dishonest business men is another vital reason for the price hike?

However much the Finance Minister waxed eloquent on the sympathy and help of the state government for the small and cottage industries of the state, in reality we see that the industrial and fiscal policies of the state government could not save the small and cottage industries of this state from a dying condition. The dying handloom and bell metal industries are glaring testimonies to this. Let me mention the precarious condition of the handloom industries first. The way the price of yarn has gone up, it has become almost impossible for the weavers to stand the competition. The government, at one time, promised to supply yarn to the weavers at cheaper rates. But as usual the promise was on paper and as a result even to maintain their existence has become a problem today. That is why you can well see that the once renowned areas for their handloom products like Dhanekhali, Bankura etc. are today filled with mill cloth. Those handloom cloth renowned for their quality have almost disappeared from the market.

Over and above this, enhancement of Entry Tax on these handicraft products is hitting hard these industries and is further aggravating their condition. Due to this as also absence of government backing the bell

metal industries of the state too are on the verge of extinction. The present pitiable condition of the once famous bell metal industries of Khagra today bears glaring testimony to this. No step is being taken by the state government to keep these industries alive. It is my firm opinion that the way the handicraft and cottage industries are fast moving towards extinction will have a serious repercussion on the already tottering economy of the state. Because till today, side by side with the organised industries quite a large number of people of our country eke out their living from these crafts. So, under such a situation the rapid death of these industries will mean a complete stoppage of avenues of living for lakhs and lakhs of people.

Regarding Operation Barga the Finance Minister himself has admitted at last in his budget speech that Operation Barga has caused apprehension. We have been complaining for quite sometime past that in the name of Operation Barga thousands of poor peasant families possessing marginal land are becoming victims of unjustified harassment, oppression and violence and that by forcibly planting bargadars in their lands they are being deprived of their last resort. But the 'Left Front' government has so long tried to brush aside these complaints labelling them as slanders. But today being pressed by circumstances they have been forced, partially though, to admit their mistakes. The Finance Minister has said that with regard to Operation Barga there cropped up 'some' misunderstanding here and there. Operation Barga being confined only to administrative directives, and having no enforceability of law the big land-owners have not been touched. So whenever the real share-croppers cultivating the lands of these big land-owners go to record their names with the help of Operation Barga, this having no legal

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UTUC (Lenin Sarani)'s Call for Movement in West Bengal

Trade Union Convention Held in Calcutta

West Bengal, once the citadel of trade union and democratic movements now wears a different look thanks to the services, the CPI(M) led government is rendering to the bourgeoisie. 'Peace in industry', 'law and order', 'unhindered production' are the slogans that one hears almost daily from the CPI(M) Chief Minister and CITU leaders when the working people are being bled white by the multi-pronged attacks of the capitalist class and vested interests, by the rapacity of the hoarders and blackmarketeers. It is a 'peace' imposed on the toiling people, the other name of dumb slavery to mounting capitalist exploitation. In the background of this, the convention of trade union representatives affiliated to UTUC (Lenin Sarani) in West Bengal, held at Baker Hall, Calcutta on 9th March is an important event. The fighting tone, zeal and enthusiasm, the massive participation of working people covering major branches of trade and industry, farm labourers etc. signify that working people want movements and are ready to put up challenge to the bourgeoisie and their hirelings, notwithstanding their deceptive manoeuvres. The Baker Hall, Calcutta, was filled to its capacity on 9th March, on the occasion of the Trade Union Convention organised by UTUC (Lenin Sarani) West Bengal State Committee. It was well decorated with red flags and festoons as well as posters inscribing in them the important teachings of the great teacher of the proletariat, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh.

Comrade Moni Chatterjee, a veteran trade union leader, was in the chair. Comrade Pritish Chanda, the all-India General Secretary who was to inaugurate this convention, could not attend because of urgent works elsewhere. He sent a message which was read out. In his message,

Comrade Chanda pinpointed the problem of defending the rights and gains of the working people as well as fighting their day to day issues through united, well-planned movements against the onslaughts and conspiracies of the capitalist class. He reminded the delegates that at no time problems in the life of the working people had been so acute and complicated yet at no time also had there been so much passivity in the trade union front. It signifies that the big trade union centres led by parties like CPI(M), CPI etc. are lending a helping hand to the bourgeoisie to tide over unprecedented crisis in the system by shifting the entire burden on to the shoulder of the working people. That is why UTUC (Lenin Sarani)'s repeated appeals for building up a strong united movement to the leaders of these unions have fallen on deaf ears. So, the task is stupendous but however stupendous UTUC (Lenin Sarani) can not flinch from its responsibility as the standard bearer of the revolutionary thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. It will have to take the initiative of carrying the revolutionary message down to the working people in fields and factories, offices and establishments, expose the collaborating role of the compromising forces between labour and capital, mount ideological campaign against the agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement who are propagating the myth of social peace and assistance to the crisis ridden bourgeoisie, to the peril of the vital cause and revolutionary goal and objective of the working class movement. By exposing and isolating those compromising forces, the working people everywhere will have to build up their movements to resist the all-sided attacks of the bourgeoisie which will be mounting on them with the passing of days.

From this perspective, the convention in West Bengal is to be viewed. Hundreds of such conventions in districts and regions will be organised in order to hold out the hope and a concrete line to the working people so as to build up a mighty wave of struggle that will sweep clean the deception and frauds of the social democratic betrayers, in preparation to an all-out movement of the working people. Comrade Chanda wished success to the convention.

Comrade Tapas Dutta, one of the secretaries of the all-India body of UTUC (Lenin Sarani) inaugurated the convention. In his long speech, Comrade Dutta placed before the representatives the political developments, taking place in our country and the changes that were occurring at the same time in the alignment of forces. It was obvious, he said, that the country's political developments were pointing to the danger of all-out fascism and their danger could only be met by speedily developing mighty waves of united movements of the working people in defence of their rights which would be of great significance in building up their ultimate struggle for emancipation from capitalist bondage. But the biggest obstacle to this path of development comes not from the bourgeoisie as such but from the agents they have planted within the working class movements, the revisionist-reformist forces who are holding out false hopes and spreading reformist illusions among the toiling people and are thus keeping them away from the path of struggle and movements. No doubt, the open class collaborationist role, the pleadings of their ministers and leaders for peace and assistance to the exploiters are revealing their true colours to the working people, but our task is to bring all sections of the

working people in one united common platform of struggle against the attacks of crisis-ridden capitalism. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's revolutionary teachings are our unfailing guide. UTUC (Lenin Sarani) will have to hold aloft the banner of struggle where the social democratic traitors have thrown it to the ground, lured by the offers of parliamentary privileges by the bourgeoisie.

Comrade Sitesh Das Gupta, member of the Central Secretariat of All India Committee of UTUC (Lenin Sarani) placed before the convention the main resolution. It traced the problems of the working people—spate of retrenchments, lock outs, lay offs, further accentuated in West Bengal by acute power crisis due to gross mismanagement and failures of the 'Left Front' government, mounting price rise of essential commodities due to price manipulations by hoarders and black marketeers, attempts to increase workload by rationalisation,

freezing of wages, bonus cut etc. The resolution highlighted the open defence CPI (M) led ministry in the state and its trade union and peasant wings CITU and Krishak Sabha are rendering to capitalist and vested classes against the working people from within and outside. The leadership of these revisionist parties and organisations are blocking united movements and are at the same time trying to kill the very fighting mood and mental make up of the working people by surrendering the basic rights and just demands of the workers and farm labourers to the interests of the capitalists who are in deep crisis. As vocal defender of the system, this government is setting police and para-military forces against the legitimate democratic movements, the concrete instances of which were the civil disobedience movements led by SUCI on 15th June and 31st August last year and the Santaldih and Calcutta Port workers' movements. Instances were galore when the CPI(M) leaders from ministry and

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Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper PROLETARIAN ERA to be published in the first issue after last day of February.

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I, Sukomal Das Gupta, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated, Calcutta
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Sd/- SUKOMAL DAS GUPTA
Signature of Publisher

Budget Speech in West Bengal Assembly

(Contd. from Page 4)

enforcibility, the big land-owners take advantage of that and secure injunctions from the court. But the axe has fallen on the helpless, poor peasants, widows, primary teachers, low income employees and other such poor land-owners. They are being subjected to all sorts of harassments by placing fake bargadars on their lands. As a result, these small land-owners are losing even the little means they had to somehow earn their living depending upon their small lands. Pressed under such a situation they are even trying to get relieved of their little possession. But there too they are not getting buyers at market price. The Finance Minister has in his budget speech declared the government's decision to set up a Land Transfer Organisation allocating Rs. 50 lakhs for that purpose, so that the peasants in such a situation can sell their lands at current market price. It is good that the government has made arrangements so that those who want to sell their lands get fair price. But does it solve the real problem? The government has not made any arrangements so that the small land-owners, who due to harassments are getting forced to sell their lands can retain their lands and earn their living. So, the above arrangement fails to touch the real problem. The number of landless will grow further as a result of which the problem of unemployment will assume more acute and alarming proportion. Because, the government is unable to make any alternative arrangement for their employment.

On the education front, the 'Left Front' government has made school education free in class Nine and Ten from this year and the Finance Minister has announced in his budget speech the government's decision to make education free in class Eleven and Twelve as well from the next year. So far so good. But our question is how far it can give

relief to the guardians by exempting them from paying tuition fees only? Expenses incidental to education like those for books, papers, ink, etc. are increasing at such rates that students from ordinary families are extremely hard put to continue their studies. Besides, the students have to pay a considerable sum as development and other fees despite the government's scheme providing for exemption from paying tuition fees. And keeping pace with the price rise, these fees are continuously on the increase. Is the financial pressure on the guardians due to these fees any the less insignificant? The government directive in this regard is that the schools shall not increase fees beyond those charged in 1972. But this is bound to create practical difficulties in school administration. Because in view of the steep rise in price of all the articles like chalk, duster, paper or printing, the schools will find it practically impossible to conduct examination or other works if they are to charge fees at the 1972 rates. In the circumstance, our clear proposal is that the government take the full financial responsibility of the schools. Otherwise, the problem will aggravate.

Next, let us consider the case of the public undertakings run by the state government. While the vital development programme are suffering from non-availability of funds, the enormous wastage of wealth and money, in the government undertakings for want of proper care and supervision has hardly any parallel. Almost all government undertakings in this state are running at enormous losses amounting to crores of rupees. And the losses are increasing every year. Not to speak of improvement over the Congress regime, the state of affair in this field has worsened further. One need not go far. Just look at the State Transport Corporations, the State Electricity Board

or the government milk project and you will find where things have come down today. As illustrations I am citing here a few instances with statistics. For example, while the loss of the Calcutta State Transport Corporation stood at Rs. 11 crores and 28 lakhs in 1976-77 during the Congress regime it has swelled to Rs. 14 crores and 12 lakhs in 1978-79 under the stewardship of the present 'Left Front' government. The North Bengal State Transport Corporation's loss has soared up from Rs. 1 crore and 86 lakhs in 1976-77 to Rs. 2 crores and 75 lakhs in 1978-79. The losses sustained by almost all the state government undertakings are thus increasing from year to year. Crores of rupees are draining out from the public exchequer as subsidy to meet these losses. On the other hand, if a measure of efficiency could be restored in the administration through careful and determined handling, if corruption and wastage were firmly checked, these public undertakings could easily be transformed into profitable enterprises serving as source of extra revenues to the tune of crores of rupees. Undoubtedly, this extra revenue could be of assistance to the government in relieving the people of tax burdens and undertaking many more development projects in the public interest.

The 'Left Front' had pledged in its 36 point programme to curb the multinational corporations and the monopoly capitalists with all its might. In reality however, this government is doing just the reverse. The government is pursuing an open arm policy toward the multinationals and monopolists. Messrs. Jyoti Basu, Promode DasGupta, etc. have changed their tune after assumption of office. They are now making pleas that it is not possible to run the government without the multinationals and the monopolists in the existing set up. This budget fully exposes the abject surrender of the

PIPRA OUTRAGE:

Comrade Sankar Singh's Statement

Armed gangsters attacked the Harijan village of Pipra in Bihar, ransacked the village and set fire to a large number of huts. Even as per official report, fourteen Harijans died in this incident which exceeded in ghastliness, the earlier incidents of Parosbiga and Dohia even.

A three-member team of the SUCI went from Patna to Pipra on a fact finding mission through firsthand enquiries. On return, the team submitted a report which makes it clear that the mass murder was basically the outcome of dispute between land-owners and agricultural labourers. There were simmering disputes over wages and over forcible seizure of land by the big landowners. Castism has been used as a tool by the vested interest to crush the economic struggle, the class agitation of the poor. Comrade Shankar Singh, Bihar State Secretary of the SUCI, has said in a statement: Faced with the growing agitation of the poor peasants, the vested classes are fanning up caste and communal feelings in

their nefarious bid to confuse the people, to divert their attention from the real enemy and to divide them in warring groups in order to safeguard their class interest. Because of their inability to understand the nature of the economic struggle, its class basis and to see through this design of vested class, even a section of the poor and middle peasants has been led astray. We appeal to all sections of the exploited peasants not to be taken in by this trickery and to cement their unity in the struggle against the vested interest.

We demand exemplary punishment for the guilty and immediate adequate relief measure for the affected families. At the same time, in order to prevent recurrence of such incidents, we once again emphasise the need to form high-power all-party committees at the state and national levels to fight social causes of such incidents through democratic and cultural movements.

'Left Front' government to the monopoly capitalists. On the plea of encouraging trade and commerce, but actually to win favours of the big business and the industrialists, the present budget has proposed to reduce stamp duty on transfer of big property and debentures and the sales tax and entry tax of motor cars and their spare parts. But this government has not made any attempt in this budget to relieve the tax burdened common people by abolishing panchayat tax, professional tax, or by lowering sales tax on essential commodities. This year, too, the 'Left Front' government has increased the budgetary grant for the police by Rs. 7 crores 23 lakhs and 69 thousands in order to strengthen the repressive arm of the state in the interest of the capitalist class. No

wonder that these pro-capitalist measures in this budget, have been greeted by different organisations of the capitalists. The Bengal Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bharat Chamber of Commerce, etc. have all hailed this budget of the 'Left Front' government as you may have seen in the news papers.

For these reasons, when asked by journalists of our reaction about the present budget, I have told that the budget proved that in a sense the 'Left Front' government of the state was outbidding the two Congress and the Janata in the competition to serve the interest of the ruling capitalist class. However, before I conclude I record our opposition to this anti-people budget of the 'Left Front' government.

Assam Question

(Contd. from page 3) a 'package programme' for speedy economic development and opening of new avenues for employment should be immediately undertaken by the government. We also voiced the demand for sealing the border to check the infiltration of foreign nationals as also for preparing a National Population Register and issue of identity slips to the genuine voters. These measures brook no delay and it is only by promptly taking these steps that the explosive situation in Assam can be eased.

We are of the firm opinion that these proposals suggested by our party will meet the problems of Assam for the present. They can at least stop the present intriguing situation from further worsening and halt the march of the secessionist forces. We also urge the people of Assam in particular to realise that the lasting solutions to their fundamental problems of life like unemployment, poverty etc. lie in uninterrupted pace of industrialisation through mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture which the moribund capitalism of our country cannot fulfil. In order to achieve the legitimate demands of all sections of the common people and to attain speedy economic development of the state it is incumbent to build up a mighty mass movement which may one day lead to anti-capitalist revolution providing permanent solution of all these problems.

While discussing all aspects of a very explosive situation in Assam, it is pertinent to note that while all the responsible political parties agreed on the question of identifying the foreign nationals and sending them back lawfully to their original homelands, the situation became very much complicated because of the fact that these politics did not tak

recourse to the scientific solution of this problem, which was well within reach, of giving constitutional recognition and safeguard to Assamese language as the state language irrespective of percentage of population. It could thereby protect their culture, but on the contrary, the parochialists opted for the heinous path of deporting the people of the minority community inhabiting Assam who were none but citizens of India as unwanted and even as 'foreigners'.

From the unscientific outlook and on the harmful concept of safeguarding the interests of the Assamese speaking people by maintaining their majority, the present agitation was organised.

For this reason, this became unjust, illogical, communal in character and oppressive. This was not a movement embracing all sections of the people irrespective of community, religious faiths etc. in a united platform of struggle on the basis of an agreed common charter. Rather, as it grew out of feelings of enmity and ill-will between the different lingual and religious communities it could never attain the character of secular democratic legitimate movement. As an inevitable result, this has generated a vicious atmosphere of inter-community distrust and hatred, inciting the people of one particular community to a fratricidal war against the people of other communities.

Having got the backing of the governmental administrative machinery the parochial forces and the vested interests brought down dastardly attacks on the unarmed, innocent people of minority community. Hundreds of helpless people have lost their lives. Thousands of their houses were gutted. A sense of absolute helplessness, uncertainty and panick prevail among the people of minority community. But how it could happen at all when

the first charge of a civilised government was to protect the life and dignity of a citizen is a question that should be raised in one voice from all sane and democratic minded people of our country to the government at the centre as also to the state administration. It is now the direct responsibility of Indira government to see that such tragic and shameful things do not occur again. Can it therefore sit idle for a single day? Why then is it bungling? Why is it not coming out with prompt implementation of the just and logical proposals that we have offered? Is it to fish in troubled waters and then to appear as the 'great saviour'? We must remind them that this is not the time nor the occasion to resort to such cheap politics. Bigger and fundamental issues are at stake and they would demand that a rational solution is to be made here and now.

But we are to be mindful of the reality that what is happening in Assam, despite all the facts, is not simply a law and order question. We will be grievously wrong if we view it in that way. We will miss then the complexity of the problem and fail to touch the head and heart of the Assamese speaking people. We are to remember that any solution that fails to touch a responsive chord in their minds will be no solution, it will be something imposed from above, against their will. Nor can the parochialist forces, the real culprits be isolated from the people.

Not only this, there is the underlying danger of this movement taking the extreme turn of secession however much it may be unwanted even to a section within the agitators. So care and caution should be the watchwords.

The present situation in Assam is an eye-opener in another respect. It has shown what tragic consequence awaits the fate of the people if their pain and sufferings, their grievances and heart burnings, expectations and

dreams do not find a correct outlet and expression in genuine left and democratic movements but become the victim of machinations of the parochial and reactionary forces.

It has also provided a telling lesson to the left and democratic parties and forces by pointing out the fact that with the accentuation of crisis in moribund capitalist economy within the Indian bourgeois state structure, if they fail to channelise people's mounting discontent to mighty wave of legitimate democratic movements, the parochial and reactionary forces will simply exploit the situation to breed further division and disunity and fratricidal strife among the people to wreck their class solidarity, cohesion, at times even to the point of secessionist demands in certain places, all to give further lease of life to this chaos-discredited utterly bankrupt moribund capitalist system.

Taking proper lessons from these experiences if the left and democratic parties even now fail in their duty to organise sincere and intensive ideological cultural movements against the reactionary and parochial thoughts and ideas, they will have to blame themselves for the fate that will befall on them. But if they think that because of their failure there will be no future for democratic movement then they will surely be proved wrong. Democratic movement will arise out of the very social necessity, and social development has its distinct law. Democratic movement therefore will grow out even without these forces, if they fail, as the inexorable law of history.

The immediate task and responsibility that the true left and democratic parties and forces will have to undertake after the sad and shameful happenings in Assam can be summed up thus:

First, they are to fight to the end to ensure constitutional recognition of Assamese as the state language in order to maintain and safeguard the cultural integrity of the Assamese speaking people. Secondly, they will have to build mighty united movement for the industrialisation and speedy economic development of the state in order to ease to some extent the pressing unemployment problem. Thirdly, they are to ensure safety and security of the linguistic and religious minorities at all costs in order to foil the mischievous attempts of the reactionary and parochial forces to wreck the class solidarity and cohesion of the working people. Forthly, for this the people of minority community especially the Bengali speaking community must be ensured full freedom and rights to cultivate their own language and culture. Fifthly, in order to infuse in Assamese speaking, Bengali speaking and other communities the all-important lesson that any advancement of their respective language and culture is not antagonistic to one another but is rather mutually conducive to the process of assimilation and integration, congenial atmosphere will have to be created for free exchange of views and opinions between people of various communities. Only the legitimate democratic movement on agreed common issues can create such an atmosphere. That is why what becomes the pivotal question in finding out a rational solution to the problems in Assam is the proper democratic atmosphere in place of the present poisonous atmosphere of mutual ill-will, distrust and hatred among the different communities. We call upon the responsible political parties and the people of Assam to move towards that end.

UTUC (Lenin Sarani)'s Convention

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CITU bodies imposed unjust terms on the workers to appease the top monopoly houses, industrialists and jotedars in the villages. CPI(M) in particular, the resolution noted, was thus striving to earn the blessings of the ruling bourgeois class to appear as their national alternative in parliamentary politics.

The resolution outlined programme in preparation of a statewide movement which includes :

Observance of Demand Week from 1st to 7th May this year by wearing Demand Badge, Mass Deputation at district levels, protest demonstrations etc ;

Holding district level convention from 15th to 30th May.

After completion of these programmes, the body will meet to chalk out a higher phase of movement.

Comrade Fatick Ghosh who was the main speaker in the convention gave a penetrating and factual analysis of different aspects of the role of betrayal of the revisionist forces like CPI(M) and its allies. He reminded the representatives about the danger, Indira's coming to power is posing and the steps she had already taken like enactment of a MISA type law which was not to be used against the black marketeers as she claimed but against the trade union and democratic movements. Comrade Ghosh said that the mask of 'pro people' stand of the social democratic parties and trade union bodies was wearing thin in the light of their concrete acts and deeds to the detriment of vital interests of the working people. What is wanted of us is to shake off all our bad style of works and other shortcomings. We must prepare ourselves to be in the van of the

incoming movements of the people for the working people cannot for long bear patiently the many-sided attacks that are being heaped on them. Remember Comrades, Comrade Ghosh urged, on us the mantle falls for organising and leading the working people let down and betrayed by the so-called big organisations who are 'big' only in names but not 'big' in discharging their responsibility to the working class cause and movement.

Observe 24th April

(Contd. from page 1)

attempt to concentrate all power in her hands by any means, be it the toppling of state governments directly by clamping Presidents Rule or by engineering defections and through other devices, so that she may get absolute majority in both Houses and be free to introduce any measure in the name of democracy for protecting the interests of the bourgeois class and passing on the increasing burden of the all-out crisis in capitalist system on the people. Long ago all parties, even the so-called left parties have given up the road of democratic mass movement to resist this heinous fascist onslaught on the people, and are actually strengthening the hands of the party chosen and installed at the centre by the ruling bourgeoisie. In this suffocating situation when people are already groaning under the exploitative and oppressive machinery of crisis ridden capitalist system there is only one way out for the people and that is to organise and take active part in mighty mass movements under the leadership of our Party. For some time already the Central Committee of our Party has given the call for and already actually initiated democratic mass struggles on legitimate demands of

DYO music squad presented inspiring songs. Comrade Gopal Tewari, a jute worker also presented song composed by him. Comrades Sanat Dutta, Dilip Bhattacharjee, Sankar Saha and many others spoke. The meeting came to an end with the 'Internationale' song by the DYO music squad. The delegates coming from almost all the districts returned with a spirit of enthusiasm and determination.

the people in different states. In different parts of the country in different places and localities people are suffering and have their own legitimate and justified local demands which need to be taken up and organised in mass movements. At the same time the Central Committee of our Party cautions to be aware of the class content of the exploitative policies of the centre which is growing towards fascism and affecting every man's life throughout the length and breadth of the country. So when organising people's movement on local demands it is our bounden duty to keep these vital issues in mind and politically educate the people and to build up the movements on the base political line of anti-capitalist socialist revolution and higher cultural edifice on the guidelines set down by our beloved leader, teacher and guide Comrade Shibdas Ghosh; setting up people's committees which will ultimately develop the political power of the people.

The true significance of observing 24th April lies in renewing the pledge to implement the directions given by the Central Committee and strive with even greater

Red Salute Comrade C. B. Misra,

Comrade Chandra Bhan Misra, President KKMf, Gorakhpur District Committee, and a distinguished organiser of UP State unit of our party SUCI as well as a renowned mass leader of Gorakhpur breathed his last on 13th February 1980 due to heart attack.

Coming from a poor family of Gorakhpur District Comrade Misra in his early life came in contact with the great leader of the proletariat Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and his revolutionary life and teachings and joined SUCI to further the cause of anti-capitalist socialist revolution of our country.

Whatever responsibility he was bestowed with by the Party, he always carried those out with revolutionary zeal and determination. He was the first to build up SUCI in Gorakhpur District and connected with several local organisations engaged in building up local movements against capitalist exploitation. He was the editor of 'Hamara Path' the first Hindi fortnightly of the SUCI.

His demise is a great loss not only to our Party SUCI but to the working class movement of our Party and especially the peasant movement of UP. The Party dips the red banner in memory of the departed comrade.

Kerala State Council of AIDSO places Memorandum to the Chief Minister

Trivandrum, 28th Feb. '80: Under the auspices of the Kerala State Council of AIDSO hundreds of students submitted a charter of demands to the Chief Minister of Kerala in Trivandrum on 27th February last. At the call of AIDSO students from various colleges, schools and other private educational institutions marched in a colourful procession decorated with flags, festoons and placards through the city to the Secretariat Building. For the people it was a new experience to see such

a well disciplined students demonstration.

effort to fulfill the historic duty of our party and hasten the revolutionary struggle for emancipation from oppression and exploitation of our people and lead them to their cherished goal.

Before going to the Chief Minister, a meeting was held in front of the Secretariat where Comrade Ajayan, Vice-President of AIDSO, Kerala State Committee, read out the charter of demands. Comrade Venugopal, State Secretary, then addressed the gathering. Thereafter a delegation consisting of Comrade Subramoni, State President of AIDSO, Comrade Venugopal and Comrade Ajayan went to meet the Chief Minister but as the Chief Minister was not present, the memorandum was handed over to his P.A. who assured them that the government would look into the demands outlined in the charter.

Editor-in-Chief—NIHAR MUKHERJEE